

## **VA/ Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program**

VA has an agreement to include VA-nominated Fellows as a participation 'track' in The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program, which began in 2013. The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program, sponsored by The Atlantic Philanthropies and the John A. Hartford Foundation is a unique opportunity for professionals in health and aging to receive the experience and skills necessary to make a positive contribution to the development and implementation of health policies that affect older Americans.

The year-long program has offered Fellows the opportunity to participate in a residential track or a non-residential track. The 'VA track' allows a Fellow to remain based at their local VA institution but work on a policy project that may involve brief placement(s) throughout the year at relevant sites. This VA Track has some unique features but largely will mirror the overall program. Core program components focusing on career development and professional enrichment are provided for Fellows in all program tracks.

The deadline for determination of eligibility to participate in the program is April 1, 2016. The deadline for submission of complete application is April 15, 2016.

## **What is The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program?**

**This one-year mentored policy program provides:**

- Formal sessions in Washington, DC and other locations addressing health and aging policy along with general career development and professional enrichment content
- A nationally recognized mentor identified during the course of the orientation based on discussions with the Directors of the Program and Fellow's area of interest to assist the Fellow's policy and career development
- Participation in an ongoing community of peers and mentors to advance knowledge and practice to improve the nation's health and the profession.

The program curriculum includes an orientation program in Washington, DC that runs for approximately 5 weeks between the end of October through the beginning of December. The program does not schedule sessions on weekends or over Thanksgiving.

In addition, there is a 2-day leadership summit in the fall, a 1.5-day communications workshop in February/March, and a 1-day symposium in the spring. During the course of the year, VA Fellows are otherwise at their home institutions with an expectation that approximately 20% of the Fellow's time will be focused on their policy collaboration/project for the year. The travel expenses for these activities will be provided to VA by The Health and Aging Policy Fellowship.

VA Health and Aging Policy Fellows will participate fully in the program. More information about the program is found at <http://www.healthandagingpolicy.org/>. That website provides information about their current program but does not accurately describe deadlines, some program processes, or financial issues involved for the VA Track. This document describes the VA Track for 2016.

## **Who is eligible?**

VA Fellows must be nominated by the Office of Academic Affiliations and will be selected by the Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program through a national competition based on the applicant's commitment to health and aging issues, leadership potential, and interest in impacting policy. The program has a broad interdisciplinary focus: Fellows have included

physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists, dieticians, healthcare administrators, epidemiologists, economists, and lawyers from academic and practice settings, spanning career stages from newly minted PhDs to senior professors and community leaders. The program is open to U.S. citizens at all career stages, with a focus on those early or midway through their careers.

A paid VA appointment is required prior to starting The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program as a VA Fellow but is not required at the time of application. Part-time VA appointments are acceptable to meet eligibility criteria. Applicants may be VA staff or trainees (e.g. Advanced Fellows). The VA track in this program is a curriculum enrichment opportunity and does not include any supplemental salary support for the Fellow's time or effort. All applicants to the VA track must demonstrate that their underlying VA position will allow them the time to participate in this program.

## What is the application process?

There are two stages for application to this program.

### Stage 1: Eligibility Determination

VA trainees/employees stating interest in applying to The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program must receive determination of eligibility from VA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA). Only those applicants who are determined to be eligible can be considered for program participation. OAA shall provide eligibility determination to applicants generally within 3 working days of our receipt of all required materials. The elements below must be submitted at one time via email to Ms. Deborah Ludke ([Deborah.ludke@va.gov](mailto:Deborah.ludke@va.gov)) at any time but **not later April 1, 2016**. Messages offering partial documentation, even if over time all required materials may have been submitted, will not be considered.

The request for eligibility determination shall include the following elements:

- Cover letter from candidate stating interest in program and describing the following:
  - The paid VA appointment that the applicant will have at the time the program begins in Fall, 2016.
  - Local VA leadership support, and commitment for protection of time needed to participate in program
  - Current contact information including physical address, e-mail address, and telephone number.
- Letter(s) of support from local VA mentor approved through Service Chief, VAMC Designated Education Officer (or ACOS/Education) and Facility Director. The letter(s) of support shall address at least:
  - Local VA mentor background, including prior mentorship experience
  - Local VA mentor time commitment to support this application
  - Institutional commitment for participant's time, space, travel (please see details about travel funding below) and equipment required for program participation
- Applicant CV

### Stage 2: Program Application

The deadline for submission of the application materials to The Health and Aging Policy Fellowship Program National Program Office (HAPF NPO) is **April 15, 2016**.

The application shall include the following elements:

1. Applicant Information
  - a. Name
  - b. Degree(s)
  - c. Discipline/professional field
  - d. Present position at time of application
  - e. Institution/organization at time of application
  - f. Anticipated position(s) and institutions (VA and other) expected at time of participation, if different than above
  - g. Current work address
  - h. Current home address
  - i. Current telephone number
  - j. Current fax number
  - k. Current e-mail address
  - l. Choice of fellowship track: Specify VA Fellow
  
2. Essays--Brief essays on the following topics:
  - a. The reasons you want to be a Health and Aging Policy Fellow, including your strengths and qualifications for the program, the specific objectives you hope to achieve from this experience, and how they relate to your professional goals. (Limit response to 3 pages with 1-inch margins, 1.5 spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font.)
  - b. A description of your experiences and/or contributions in the health and aging field, either in your professional work or through community or volunteer service, and how they will contribute to your fellowship experience. (Limit response to 2 pages with 1-inch margins, 1.5 spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font.)
  - c. Please describe the policy project you would like to complete during the fellowship term. The project should focus on a public policy issue(s). The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program does not support research or program implementation projects. Your project description should include:
    - i. The policy topic on which you would like to work (e.g., policies to improve the quality of nursing home care, policies designed to increase the use of clinical preventive services, policy options for long-term care financing, policies to improve care coordination, policy options to enhance physical activity/transportation alternatives, etc.) with details on why this policy is important.
    - ii. The specific objectives you wish to achieve and/or questions you hope to answer (e.g., identification of possible legislative or regulatory options, understanding of necessary coalitions to garner support, steps in the legislative process to move ahead, etc.).
    - iii. How you envision linking your policy project with a legislative component (e.g., Congressperson and/or Senators from your state, Congress, your state legislature, governor's office, executive branch agencies in Washington, DC for implementation/regulation). Note that as VA employees, there are likely legal and policy implications on engagement

with legislators. VA OAA will assist VA Fellows in addressing questions about this issue.

- iv. Relationship of the proposed project to Veterans health.
- v. Organizations and/or individuals with which it would be most appropriate for you to work on this project, i.e., the networks you would like to form.
- vi. Length of time/frequency and plan for short placement periods (if any) away from your current job.
- vii. Work plan and timeline for finishing the project.
- viii. How you plan for the results of your project to influence policy.
- ix. What would be your ideal result?

(Limit response to 5 pages with 1-inch margins, 1.5 spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font.)

d. Additional Budget for Policy Project

- i. Travel to project-related meetings (e.g., trips to meet with officials at VA Central Office or other Federal agencies, trip to CMS to meet with officials regarding Medicare Part D data, trip to attend a conference at the Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform, meet with colleagues and mentors at The Brookings Institution, The American Enterprise Institute or AARP, etc.)
- ii. The requested budget for VA Fellows cannot exceed \$10,000. Travel to the Orientation and other program-sponsored meetings will be addressed separately by the HAPF NPO and should not be included in this budget. When possible, we suggest that project-related travel be coordinated with fellowship-sponsored meeting travel in order to reduce project-related travel expenses.

3. Supporting Documents. Please include:

- a. Curriculum vitae
- b. A one-page biographical sketch
- c. The name and contact information for one institutional reference (e.g., department chief, supervisor, faculty mentor, agency or department director, etc.) whom you have asked to write a reference letter for you. The letter should:
  - i. Address the selection criteria and your qualifications for the program
  - ii. Confirm the institution's support of your participation in the program
  - iii. Describe the reference's willingness to serve as your advisor by assisting with your growth as a health policy leader, if selected
- d. The names and contact information for two professional references whom you have asked to write letters for you. The letters should address the selection criteria and your qualifications for the program.
- e. All reference letters should be sent directly to The HAPF NPO at [healthandagingpolicy@columbia.edu](mailto:healthandagingpolicy@columbia.edu) and received by **April 15, 2016.**

### **Process for Travel Funding for VA Participants in The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program**

The Health and Aging Policy Fellowship Program is offering most travel expenses as a gift to VA as part of this program relationship. The details of the process will require review by VA Counsel as well as cooperation with each Fellow's VA facility, which shall be reimbursed for travel approved in advance both by the Program NPO and the Fellow's local VA facility. Finalists

and approved Fellows shall receive detailed instructions about this process from VHA's Office of Academic Affiliations, Advanced Fellowships Office.

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**For more information please contact the Advanced Fellowships Office:**

Director: [Stuart Gilman, MD, MPH](#)  
Assistant Director: [Jeffrey Cully, PhD](#)  
Administrative Officer: [Deborah Ludke, MHA](#)

Telephone 562-826-5492  
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Office of Academic Affiliations (10A2D)  
Advanced Fellowships and Professional Development

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